VARIOUS

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, VOLUME 09, NO. 53, MARCH, 1862

Various

The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 09, No. 53, March, 1862

Various

The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 09, No. 53, March, 1862 / Various — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Various
The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 09, No. 53, March, 1862 / A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics

THE FRUITS OF FREE LABOR IN THE SMALLER ISLANDS OF THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

The emancipation of an enslaved race seems, at first thought, a most uncertain and perilous undertaking. To do away with inherited and constantly strengthening tendencies toward irresponsibility and idleness,—to substitute the pleasure of activity or the distant good from industry for the very palpable influence of compulsion,—to implant forethought and alertness and ingenuity, where, before, labor was stolid and sulky and unthinking,—to confer the habit of self-dependence and the courage for unknown tasks on a people timid, childish, and dependent,—to teach self-control in place of the custom of control by masters, or by caprice and passion,—in a word, to make a free man out of a born slave,—appears at first sight the most difficult task which any legislator or reformer could ever attempt.

Leaving out of view all possible moral changes which might be induced by time and patient labor on such a being, we should say beforehand that at least economically—that is, regarding the production for the wants of the world by the freed man—the experiment of emancipation would prove, in all probability, a failure. We put it to the reader. Suppose that you, an Anglo-American, not born a slave, had by some misfortune been captured fifteen years since by an Algerine pirate, and during those years, under the fear of lash and bayonet, had been vigorously adding to the commodities of the world in the production of cotton. At length, in some moment of Algerine sentiment for human rights, you are set free by the government, and are enabled to possess a little farm of your own in the African mountains. What would probably be your views as to the economic duty of adding to that great benefaction to the human race, the production of cotton? What would be your personal sentiments toward cotton and all species of labor connected therewith? How, especially, would you be apt to view the estate where you had spent so many agreeable years, and the master for whom you had produced so much without reward? Fancy an effort on his part to *hire* you,—possibly even at lower wages than other laborers receive, in view of your many obligations to him!

It is barely possible that you might prefer even the small farm,—where you were producing nothing but “pumpkin” for the world, to increasing the exports of Algeria on the old property, under the same master and at half-wages. For some years at least, the world’s production would not probably be greatly assisted by you. A certain degree of idleness would have a charm for a time, even to an Anglo-American, after such an experience.

What shall we say, then, of an inferior race, slave-born, ignorant, and undisciplined by moral influences, placed suddenly in such new and strange circumstances? Could we reasonably expect that they would at once labor under freedom as they did under slavery? Could we demand that the properties which had been sprinkled with the sweat of their unrequited toil for so many years, which possibly had witnessed their sufferings under nameless wrongs, where the tone even of the now labor-paying landlord must have something of the old ring of the slave-master,—that these should be cultivated as eagerly as their own little farms by freed men? Especially could we ask it, if the masters undertook to exercise their old sway over political economy, and paid less wages than the market-

rate, and even these with irregularity? Should we be rightfully shocked, if the products of these large estates even entirely failed through want of labor? What else could we expect?

Suppose, still further, as years went by, the former masters, all the wealthy and powerful classes of society, united in discouraging the improvement and opposing the general education of this, the lowest and poorest class. What would be the almost certain result?

If we should hear that such an emancipation was an economic failure, we should not be in the least surprised. If we were told that the freed men would not work on the old estates,—that the products were falling off,—that the emancipated slaves were not willing to work at all,—that they were idle, and were growing constantly more ignorant and corrupt in morals, and useless to the world,—we should sigh, but say,—"It is the natural retribution for injustice. These are the harvests of slavery."

But if—contrary to our expectation—the results of this emancipation were entirely different: if the freed man produced more than the slave,—if he was more industrious, more active, more laborious and self-dependent,—if he even labored for his former master for hire,—if the latter confessed that the hire of the free man was cheaper than the ownership of the slave,—if tables of export and import showed that he added far more to the wealth of the world than ever before,—if the increasing price of land proved the efficiency of his industry,—if independent freeholds were created in large numbers since emancipation,—if additional churches and schools made evident the improvement of character and the desire of advancement: we should be obliged to say that there was but one explanation of this most happy and unexpected improvement, namely,—that the human soul, by virtue of its very nature and capacities, is somehow adapted to freedom, so that the most imbruted and degraded is better and more useful, when he cares and labors for himself, than when another utterly controls him.

That the negro will not work, unless he is forced to, is the strong and almost invincible objection in the minds of multitudes of persons to emancipation.

What, then, are the facts bearing on this important point? We propose, under the guidance of candid observers and travellers, such as Schomburg, Breen, Cochin, Burnley, and, best of all, Sewell, briefly to examine a field where the experiment has been fairly tried, namely, the smaller islands of the British West Indies. A full examination of the larger island, Jamaica,—would of itself demand an entire article, or even a volume.

The remark is often repeated by West Indian travellers, that no sweeping conclusions on economical points can ever be true of the West Indies as a whole,—that each island is distinct from the others, and to be judged on principles which apply to itself alone. This important fact must be borne in mind by the reader, in examining the question of the results of emancipation in the West Indies.

In **Barbadoes** the governing peculiarities are the dense population to the area, and the great numbers of the laboring class. The number to the square mile is greater than in China, averaging eight hundred. This fact alone placed a much greater power in the masters' hands after emancipation, as the competition of labor must be so much more severe than with a more sparse population.

With something of the perversity induced by slavery, the planters maintained a species of land-tenure among their freed slaves which could not but have a disastrous effect.

In the first years succeeding the act of emancipation, the tenant worked for twenty per cent. below the market-rate of wages, and his service was considered equivalent to the rent. Now he possesses a house and a land-allotment on an estate for which he pays a stipulated rent; but, *as a condition of renting*, he must give a certain number of days' work at certain wages, generally from one-sixth to one-third lower than the market-rate. The usual wages are twenty-four cents a day; by this system of tenancy-at-will, the freed negro in Barbadoes must labor for twenty cents.

What would be the natural results of such a system? Can we wonder at such facts as Mr. Sewell quotes from a Tobago paper, in which the writer "deplores the perverse selfishness of the laborers," (i.e. in buying farms of their own,) and complains that "the laborers have large patches of

land under cultivation, and hire help at higher wages than the estates can afford to pay," and otherwise oppress their former benefactors? The remedy which the aggrieved correspondent suggests is the immediate importation of Coolies.

The truth is, however, that, owing to the crowded population of Barbadoes, the planters have had everything in their own hands, much more than in other islands. In Trinidad or British Guiana the negroes were not obliged by competition to submit to the obnoxious tenure; and they soon found, where land was so cheap, that a path to independence lay open before them in working their own little properties. The planters became more stubborn and more rigid, and the result was in many cases the absolute abandonment of large estates for want of labor.

The industry of the Barbadoes population is shown in the fact, that, out of the 106,000 acres of the island, 100,000 are under cultivation,[1] while the average price of land rises to the unprecedented height of five hundred dollars an acre.

Notwithstanding the high price of land and the low rate of wages, the freed slaves have increased the number of small proprietors with less than five acres from 1100 to 3537[2] during the last fifteen years,–an increase which alone testifies to the remarkable thrift of the emancipated negro in Barbadoes.

Mr. Sewell has talked with all classes and conditions, and "none are more ready to admit than the planters that the free laborer is a better, more cheerful, and industrious workman than was ever the slave."

"The colored mechanics and artisans of Barbadoes," says the same author, "are equal in general intelligence to the artisans and mechanics of any part of the world equally remote from the great centres of civilization. The peasantry will soon equal them, when education is more generally diffused."

The surest evidences, however, on this question are those of figures. Land has doubled in value on the island since emancipation.[3] Of the increased value of estates, we quote, as an example, the case mentioned in a published letter of Governor Hincks, January, 1858:—

> "As to the relative cost of slave and free labor in this colony, I can supply facts upon which the most implicit reliance can be placed. They have been furnished to me by the proprietor of an estate containing three hundred acres of land, and situated at a distance of about twelve miles from the shipping port. The estate referred to produced during slavery an annual average of 140 hogsheads of sugar of the present weight, and required 230 slaves. It is now worked by 90 free laborers: 60 adults, and 30 under 16 years of age. Its average product during the last seven years has been 194 hogsheads. The total cost of labor has been £770 16*s*., or £3 19*s*. 2*d*. per hogshead of 1,700 pounds. The average of pounds of sugar to each laborer during slavery was 1,043 pounds, and during freedom 3,660 pounds. To estimate the cost of slave-labor, the value of 230 slaves must be ascertained; and I place them at what would have been a low average,—£50 sterling each,—which would make the entire stock amount to £11,500. This, at six per cent. interest, which on such property is much too low an estimate, would give £690; cost of clothing, food, and medical attendance I estimate at £3 10*s*., making £805. Total cost, £1,495, or £10 12*s*. per hogshead, while the cost of free labor on the same estate is under £4."

In 1853, the French committee charged by the Governor of Martinique to visit the island reported, that "in an agricultural and manufacturing point of view the aspect of Barbadoes is dazzling."

---

[1] Schomburg.

[2] Governor Hincks.

[3] B.T. Young's Letter of January 12th, 1858, and other letters from planters, published in the *National Era*, August, 1858.

Sugar is the most important export. The following were the amounts exported before emancipation, according to Schomburg and Sewell:—

Average export,	1720-1800,	23,000	hhds.
" "	1800-1830,	20,000	"
Particular export,	1830,	22,769	"
Particular export in year of emancipation,	1834,	27,318	"

(The weight of a hogshead of sugar, it should be noted, was only 12 cwt. between 1826 and 1830; from 1830 to 1850, 14 cwt.; and now it is from 15 to 17 cwt.)

Yield in	1852,	48,610	hhds.
"	1853,	38,316	"
"	1854,	44,492	"
"	1855,	39,692	"
"	1856,	43,552	"
"	1857,	38,858	"
"	1858,	50,778	"
Average export,	1835-50,	26,000	"
" "	1851-58,	43,000	"

That is, an average more than double the export for ten years preceding emancipation.

Besides sugar, other articles are exported now to the value of $100,000. In addition, there is a large production for home-consumption, of such articles as sweet potatoes, eddoes, yams, cassava-root, etc.

If imports are the true expression of a nation's economic well-being,—as all sound political economists affirm,—then can Barbadoes show most conclusively how much more profitable to a people is freedom than chatteldom.

Average imports,	1822-32,	£600,000
Imports,	1845,	682,358
"	1856,	840,000

The imports from America are increasing in rapid measure. Thus they were in

1854	36,416 bbl.	flour.
"	1,500 "	beef.
"	9,438 "	pork.
"	49,106 "	meal.
1858	79,766 "	flour.
"	2,646 "	beef.
"	12,196 "	pork.
"	67,053 "	meal.

Under slavery, the value of American imports was not more than £60,000 per annum. Under freedom, it is from £300,000 to £400,000.

The shipping before emancipation (in 1832) numbered 689 vessels of 79,000 tons. In 1856, 966 vessels of 114,800 tons.

The population of Barbadoes is supposed to be now about 140,000, of whom 124,000 are blacks. Of these, only 22,000 are believed to be field laborers, against 81,000, just before emancipation, of men, women, and children, who labored in the field,—a fact which shows the aversion slavery had implanted to laboring on the soil, as well as the indiscreet policy of the planters. Yet, despite this decrease of the most profitable kind of labor, so great is the advantage of freedom over slavery, that the island has been enabled to make this prodigious increase in production and wealth since emancipation,—more than doubling its export of sugar, increasing its imports by $1,200,000, quintupling its imports from America, and doubling the value of land.

The progress in education and morality has not been at all so rapid as in wealth. The freed slave could not at once escape from the debasing influences of years of bondage, and the planters have deliberately set themselves against any system of popular education. Crimes against property, Sewell says, are rife, especially thieving; petty acts of anger and cruelty are also common, as well as offences against chastity; while, on the other hand, crimes of violence are almost unknown. From the last census it appears that more than half of the children born in the island are illegitimate. This sad condition of morals Mr. Sewell attributes principally to the imperfect education of the lowest classes, —the schools being mostly church-schools, and somewhat expensive. These schools, however, have increased from 27 in 1834, with 1,574 children, to 70 with 6,180 in 1857, and an infant school with 1,140; the children in Sunday-schools have increased in the same time from 1,679 to 2,071.[4]

St. Vincent is generally considered by the passing traveller as another example of the axiom that “the freed negro will not work,” and of “the melancholy fruits of emancipation.”

The decline of the wealthier classes began before emancipation, and continued after it. The planters were deeply in debt, and their estates heavily mortgaged. Slavery there, as everywhere, wasted the means of the masters, and exhausted the soil. When the day of freedom came, these gentlemen, instead of prudently endeavoring to retain the laborers on their estates, offered them lower wages than were paid on the neighboring islands. The consequence was, that the negroes preferred to buy their own little properties or to hire farms in the interior, and let the great estates find labor as they could. Mr. Sewell states that he inquired much in regard to the abandoned sugar-estates, and never found one

[4] *Letter from the Bishop of Barbadoes*, February 23, 1858. It appears in the same letter that the church-attendants have increased from 5,000 in 1825 to 28,000 in 1853.

which was deserted because labor could not be procured at fair cost; the more general reason of their abandonment was want of capital, or debt incurred previously to emancipation. That the condition of the island is not caused by the idleness of the negro is shown by the facts, that since emancipation houses have been built by freed slaves for themselves and their families, containing 8,209 persons; that from 10,000 to 12,000 acres have been brought under cultivation by the proprietors of small properties of from one to five acres; that the export of arrowroot (which is one of the small articles raised by the negroes on their own grounds) has risen from 60,000 pounds before emancipation to 1,352,250 pounds in 1857, valued at $750,000, and the cocoa-nut export has also increased largely.

The export of sugar has declined as follows:—Under slavery, (1831-34,) it was 204,095 cwt.; under apprenticeship, (1835-38,) 194,228; under free labor, (1839-45,) 127,364 cwt.; in 1846, 129,870 cwt.; in 1847, 175,615 cwt.[5]

The moral condition of the island seems most favorable. In a population of 30,000, there are *no paupers*, and 8,000 is the average church-attendance, while the average school-attendance is 2,000. The criminal records show a remarkable obedience to law; there being only seven convictions in 1857 for assault, six for felony, and 162 for minor offences. The proportion under slavery was far greater.

Grenada presented clear evidences of decline long before emancipation. The slave-population decreased as follows:—

1779,	35,000 slaves.
1827,	24,442 "
1837,	23,641 "

this last number being that for which compensation was made. The total value of all the exports in 1776 was about $3,000,000; in 1823, less than $2,000,000; in 1831, a little over $1,000,000.

The sugar export declined from 24,000,000 pounds in 1776 to 19,000,000 pounds in 1831: or more exactly, under slavery, (1831-34,) it was 193,156 cwt.; during apprenticeship, 161,308 cwt.; under free labor, (1839-45,) 87,161 cwt.; in 1846, 76,931 cwt.; in 1847, 104,952 cwt.: showing in the last year a considerable increase.

The policy of the Grenadian planters in offering low wages—the rate being from 5s. to 5s. 6d. a week—has driven the negroes to their own little properties, and has caused a diminution in the production of sugar on the large organized estates. Yet the production of other smaller articles has greatly increased, and the general well-being of the people is much advanced.

Before 1830 there were no small freeholders; now there are over 2,000. Nearly 7,000 persons live in villages, built since emancipation, and 4,573 pay direct taxes.

Last year there were only 60 paupers on the island, and those were aged and sick persons; only 18 were convicted of felony, 6 of theft, and 2 of other offences. There is an average church-attendance of 8,000, and a school-attendance of 1,600. In 1857, out of 80,000 acres, 43,800 were in a state of cultivation, and 3,800 acres were added to the cultivation of the previous year.

The sugar export of 1857 was only half that of 1831, while the aggregate value of all the exports had risen from £153,175 to £218,352. The imports had risen in the same time from £77,000 to £109,000.[6]

Tobago also showed a gradual decline before emancipation; and since that event, the production of sugar has fallen off as follows: In 1831-34 it was 99,579 cwt.; 1835-38, 89,332 cwt.; 1839-1845,

[5] Cochin's *L'Abolition de l'Esclavage*.

[6] Sewell's *Ordeal of Free Labor*, etc.

52,962 cwt.; 1846, 38,882 cwt.; 1847, 69,240 cwt. One great cause of this decline is the drawing off of capital from the old, worn-out lands to the fresh, rich, and profitable culture of Trinidad, where land is very cheap. Moreover, the climate of Tobago is not entirely favorable to sugar.

Yet a great improvement is manifest among the people. Small proprietors have much increased; even the field-hands now possess houses and lands of their own. There are 2,500 freeholders, and 2,800 tax-payers. The average church-attendance is 41 per cent, of the whole population; the average school-attendance, 1,600. Commerce is rapidly advancing. The imports have risen from £50,307 in 1854 to £59,994 in 1856; and the exports from £49,754 to £79,789 in the same time.

In **St. Lucia** the planters have followed a more wise and liberal policy towards the emancipated slaves. Better wages have been offered; liberal inducements have been held out to the negroes to cultivate the estates; efforts have been put forth to improve the social and moral condition of the laboring class. Tenancy-at-will is unknown, and the *mélairie* system (laboring on shares) has been introduced. In other words, the rich and educated have manifested some kind of humane interest for the laborers, and in return the latter have worked well and cheerfully.

Yet, in St. Lucia, as in so many other West India colonies, the financial condition of the planters, at the time of emancipation, was exceedingly embarrassed: their registered debts amounting in 1829, according to Breen, to £1,189,965.

The export of sugar is stated in Cochin's carefully prepared tables as follows: In the period of slavery, (1831-34,) 57,549 cwt.; during the apprenticeship, (1835-38,) 51,427 cwt.; under free labor, (1839-45,) 57,070 cwt; in 1846, 63,566 cwt.; in 1847, 88,370 cwt.

The imports have not risen till recently, and indicate a greater consumption of articles grown on the island. In 1833,[7] they were in value, £108,076; in 1840, £114,537; in 1843, £70,340; in 1851,[8] £68,881; in 1857, £90,064.

Of the total value of exports Breen gives tables only to 1843. In that year, they were £96,290 against £71,580 in 1833.

Since emancipation, 2,045 of the negroes have become freeholders, and 4,603 pay direct taxes.

In **Trinidad**, the question of the effects of emancipation has some peculiar elements. The island is a very large, fertile country, with a sparse population, where of course land is cheap and labor dear. Out of its 1,287,000 acres,[9] only some 30,000 are cultivated. Its whole population is but about 80,000, of whom the colored number near 50,000. Emancipation would work upon such a country somewhat as it might on Texas, for instance. There were 11,000 field-hands on the estates when slavery was abolished. The planters undertook to maintain or introduce the tenancy-at-will system, and to reduce the wages below the market-rate. Whenever the negroes retired from the estate-work, they were summarily ejected from their houses and lands, and their little gardens were destroyed. The natural effect of such an injudicious policy was, that the negro preferred squatting on the government lands about him, or buying a small, cheap plot, or hiring a farm, to remaining under the planters, and soon some 7,000 laborers had left the estates.

Many associated the idea of servitude with labor in the fields, and, abandoning agriculture, took to trade in the towns and villages, which they still pursue. Some 4,000 remained on the estates, and have never progressed, like their more independent brethren. The criminal records show a greater proportion of crime among them than among any other class. Of the others, five-sixths became proprietors of farms from one to five acres each, and 4,500 hire themselves occasionally to the estates every year.

One effect of the unfortunate contentions between capital and labor in the island has been, that no general system of public instruction was introduced till recently; education was entirely neglected:

---

[7] Breen.

[8] Sewell.

[9] Burnley's *Trinidad*.

though now, under the new system, the people will receive much more general instruction, for which purpose $20,000 were appropriated in 1859.

The public morality under such circumstances is of course of a low order. Out of 136 children born in Port-of-Spain, 100 were illegitimate. The convictions in the island for felony were 63; for misdemeanor, 865; for debt, 230.

The records of material progress show a much better result. The sugar cultivation in the last twenty years has nearly doubled, and the land in cane has risen from 15,000 to 29,000 acres. The production of cocoa has increased, though in a less proportion; while the production and consumption of home necessaries and luxuries have immensely advanced. Great practical improvements are being made everywhere, such as the substitution of steam-power for cattle and water-power. The export of sugar,[10] especially since the introduction of Coolie labor, has advanced rapidly. Before emancipation the highest export was 30,000 hhds., equal to 24,000 hhds. at present weight. Late export,—

1854,	27,987 hhds.	1857,	35,523 hhds.
1855,	31,693 "	1858,	37,000 "
1856,	34,411 "	1859,	40,000 "

The molasses trade shows a similar increase. Cocoa, which is entirely a product of negro labor, has advanced from 3,200,000 lbs. before emancipation to 5,200,000 lbs. in 1859.

Leeward Islands. **Antigua** was almost the first of the British West Indies to emancipate her slaves, and this she had the wisdom to do summarily and at once, without probation or apprenticeship. The consequences have been most happy. She has escaped the vexations and heart-burnings of the other colonies, and has established a better relation between employers and employed. With a small area, a soil not very rich, and a climate not especially adapted to sugar-growing, she has notwithstanding taken a prominent position among the West India islands. The prosperity of the island under free labor has been most encouraging. Of the 70,000 acres, 38,000 are owned by large proprietors, whose estates average 320 acres each. Its only export, with the exception of a little arrow-root, is sugar; of this, the largest crop on record (20,000 hogsheads) has been obtained since the slaves were emancipated. Ten years before emancipation, the average annual export, as given by Sewell, was 12,500 hogsheads, obtained by a field-force of 18,320 hands, of whom one-third were non-effective. From 1840 to 1850, the average was 13,000; from 1850 to 1860, 13,500, of superior weight, with a field-force of 6,000.

The export of sugar, according to Cochin, has been as follows: 1831-34, 180,802 cwt.; 1835-38, 143,878 cwt.; 1839-45, 189,406 cwt.; 1846, 102,644 cwt.; 1847, 200,201 cwt.

Besides this crop, the small proprietors raise arrow-root and provisions.

The imports show the advancing prosperity of the island. From 1822 to 1832, they amounted to £130,000, of which £40,000 were from the United States; in 1856, under free labor, they reached £266,369, of which £106,586 were from the United States,—the American imports being mostly articles of food. This remarkable increase of importations, it should be observed, is not due to an increase of population, as the population of Antigua is less now than it was twenty years since.

In commerce, it appears that ten years before emancipation, 340 vessels of 30,000 tons entered the ports of the island every year; in 1858, there were 688 of 42,534 tons.

[10] Cochin's tables give the sugar export of Trinidad as follows: Under slavery, (1831-34,) 316,338 cwt.; during apprenticeship, (1835-38,) 295,787 cwt.; under free labor, (1839-45,) 292,023 cwt.; in 1846, 353,293 cwt.; in 1847, 393,537 cwt.

Labor costs less in Antigua than in the other islands, wages being 20 cts. a day; while in Barbadoes they are 24 cts., and in Trinidad 30 cts. The production of sugar is more profitable, as respects the labor, than in the slave-islands,—costing but 1-1/5 cts. per lb.

Though the average price of land is fifty dollars an acre, the freed negroes seldom squat on the public lands, but buy little farms of their own. In 1858, the emancipated slaves had built, since 1834, 5187 houses, in which 15,644 people resided. There were that year only 299 paupers in the whole island. Education and morality had advanced. Owing to the wise liberality of the planters, nearly *one-third* of the whole revenue of the island (£10,000) was appropriated to educational, charitable, and religious purposes. The great proportion of the youth attend school. At the time of emancipation, the whole number of scholars in all the schools was 1886; in 1858, there were 52 schools with 4467 scholars, and 37 Sunday-schools with 6418. The number of illegitimate births was only 53 per cent., which is a much more favorable proportion than exists in the other islands.

The planters all agree that emancipation has been an entire success. The only drawback is a somewhat singular one, and illustrates the dependent habits which slavery generates. Under their masters, the slaves were always provided with sufficient medical attendance; but when free, they had not the means or were not prudent enough to secure this, and the consequence has been a great mortality of children, so that the births now scarcely exceed the deaths.

An intelligent English traveller, writing on "Antigua and the Antiguans" in 1844, says in regard to the question, whether the freed negro will work, that he has often observed, when a piece of land was to be *holed* for sugar-cane by task-work, the negroes rising by one or two o'clock in the morning during moonlight, going to the field and accomplishing a usual day's work (300 cane-holes) by five or six o'clock in the forenoon; then, after resting a short time, they were prepared for another task, which they completed; and still had some hours left for their own provision-grounds. When the heat is considered, and the labor of digging one cane-hole, (a trench three or four feet square and one foot deep,) we may imagine what the work of opening 600 in a day must be. The same author states that plantations which could not find a purchaser before emancipation are now worth £10,000. Another writer, quoted by Cochin, says in 1845, with reference to the efficiency of labor of the Antiguan negroes, and their employment of machinery, "The colony has made this year, with a field-force of less than 10,000, a harvest almost equal to that which has employed 30,000 laborers in Barbadoes."

Of the other Leeward Islands, Sewell says, (p. 164,) "The condition of the free peasant rises infinitely above that of the slave. In all, the people are more happy and contented; in all, they are more civilized; in all, there are more provisions grown for home-consumption than ever were raised in the most flourishing days of slavery; in all, the imports have largely increased; in all, a very important trade has sprung up with the United States; from all, there is an exportation of minor articles which were not cultivated twenty years ago, and which, in estimating the industry of a people under a free system, are often most unjustly overlooked. These are considerations from which the planter turns with contemptuous indifference. Sugar, and sugar alone, is his dream, his argument, his faith." Yet the following table of exports of sugar shows that even in that free labor has been successful.

Comparative Table of Sugar Exportations in Pounds from the Leeward Islands.[11]

[11] Sewell's *Ordeal of Free Labor*, etc.

Islands.	Annual average from 1820 to 1832.	Exports in 1858.
Antigua,	28,580,000 lbs.	26,174,000 lbs.
Dominica,	6,000,000	6,263,000
Nevis,	5,000,000	4,400,000
Montserrat,	1,840,000	1,308,000
St. Kitt's,	12,000,000	10,000,000
Total,	45,420,000 lbs.	48,145,000 lbs.

Table of Imports in Value.

Islands.	Annual average from 1820 to 1832.	Value of imports in 1858.
Antigua,	£130,000	£266,364
Dominica,	62,000	84,906
Nevis,	28,000	36,721
Montserrat,	18,000	17,844
St. Kitt's,	60,000	109,000
Total,	£298,000	£514,835 lbs.

Excess of sugar exportations under free labor, 2,725,000 lbs.
Excess of imports with free labor, £216,835

Of **Guiana**, a resident writes,—"The portion of the native population which in other countries constitutes the working class is estimated here at 70,000 souls. They present the singular spectacle, which we can contemplate in no other part of the world, of a people hardly escaped from slavery, enjoying already properties in land and houses for which they have paid nearly £100,000."

In a single county, (Berbice,) says Cochin, there had been built in 1843, since emancipation, 1184 houses, and 7,000 additional acres had been put under cultivation. In the whole colony there were 15,906 landed proprietors among the negroes who had become such since 1834. The imports, according to Lord Stanley, during the last six years of slavery, were about $13,915,000; during apprenticeship, about $17,890,000; in the first year of liberty, over $20,000,000; in the second year, about $17,463,670.

We have given, perhaps, a rather dry account of the effects of emancipation on a portion of the British West Indies. But it should be remembered that this question, as it now stands before the world, is mainly a question of figures. The great and damning argument against emancipation is the supposed experience of the West Indies, *that the negro will not work except under slavery*. The evidences of labor are in part given by figures: the number of freeholds, the price of land, the amount of the productions, the quantity consumed, and the quantity exported. The amount of imports, too, shows the desire and the means of the people to procure foreign commodities. By these plain and irrefutable evidences, we have proved that free labor in the Windward Islands, Trinidad, the Leeward Islands, and Guiana has "paid" much better than slave labor.

As Mr. Sewell has summed it up with reference to four colonies,—British Guiana, Barbadoes, Trinidad, and Antigua,—the total annual export of sugar before emancipation was 187,300,000 pounds, while now it is 265,000,000 pounds; showing an advantage under free labor of *seventy-seven million, seven hundred thousand pounds*! The total imports of the same colonies amounted before emancipation to $8,840,000; they are now $14,600,000; showing an excess of imports under free

labor, as compared with slave labor, of the value of *five million, seven hundred and sixty thousand dollars*!

It is a remarkable experience of the West Indies, to be seriously considered in the settlement of our American problem, that the islands which abolished slavery the most summarily and entirely succeeded the best after emancipation. Half-freedom, both there, and in Russia during the last year, has proved a source of jealousy to the freedman and of annoyance to the master, and ultimately, in the West Indies, interfered with production, and the permanent welfare of the islands.

It is true, that the moral curse of slavery upon the habits of the people is not so easily removed, and that we do not behold as favorable a moral and educational condition of the West India Islands as could be desired. But it should be remembered how large a share of the blame for this falls now upon the wealthier classes, who are opposed or indifferent to the education of the lower. Even these evils are being gradually removed, and emancipation is establishing itself, not merely as a grand act of justice, wisely done, but as a successful moral and economical reform, whose fruits are to be seen in the good morals, industry, and increasing wealth of many happy communities.

A STORY OF TO-DAY

PART VI

It was later than Holmes thought: a gray, cold evening. The streets in that suburb were lonely: he went down them, the new-fallen snow dulling his step. It had covered the peaked roofs of the houses too, and they stood in listening rows, white and still. Here and there a pale flicker from the gas-lamps struggled with the ashy twilight. He met no one: people had gone home early on Christmas eve. He had no home to go to: pah! there were plenty of hotels, he remembered, smiling grimly. It was bitter cold: he buttoned up his coat tightly, as he walked slowly along as if waiting for some one,—wondering dully if the gray air were any colder or stiller than the heart hardly beating under the coat. Well, men had conquered Fate, conquered life and love, before now. It grew darker: he was pacing now slowly in the shadow of a long low wall surrounding the grounds of some building. When he came near the gate, he would stop and listen: he could have heard a sparrow on the snow, it was so still. After a while he did hear footsteps, crunching the snow heavily; the gate clicked as they came out: it was Knowles, and the clergyman whom Dr. Cox did not like; Vandyke was his name.

"Don't bolt the gate," said Knowles; "Miss Howth will be out presently."

They sat down on a pile of lumber near by, waiting, apparently. Holmes went up and joined them, standing in the shadow of the lumber, talking to Vandyke. He did not meet him, perhaps, once in six months; but he believed in the man, thoroughly.

"I've just helped Knowles build a Christmas-tree in yonder,—the House of Refuge, you know. He could not tell an oak from an arbor-vitæ, I believe."

Knowles was in no mood for quizzing.

"There are other things I don't know," he said, gloomily, recurring to some subject Holmes had interrupted. "The House is going to the Devil, Charley, headlong."

"There's no use in saying no," said the other; "you'll call me a lying diviner."

Knowles did not listen.

"Seems as if I was to go groping and stumbling through the world like some forsaken Cyclops with his eye out, dragging down whatever I touched. If there was anything to hold by, anything certain!"

Vandyke looked at him gravely, but did not answer; rose, and walked indolently up and down to keep himself warm. A lithe, slow figure, a clear face with delicate lips, and careless eyes that saw everything: the face of a man quick to learn and slow to teach.

"There she comes!" said Knowles, as the lock of the gate rasped.

Holmes had heard the slow step in the snow long before. A small woman came out and went down the silent street into the road beyond. Holmes kept his back turned to her, lighting his cigar; the other men watched her eagerly.

"What do you think, Vandyke?" demanded Knowles. "How will she do?"

"Do for what?"—resuming his lazy walk. "You talk as if she were a machine. It is the way with modern reformers. Men are so many ploughs and harrows to work on 'the classes.' Do for what?"

Knowles flushed hotly.

"The work the Lord has left for her to do. Do you mean to say there is none to do,—you, pledged to missionary labor?"

The young man's face colored.

"I know this street needs paving terribly, Knowles; but I don't see a boulder in your hands. Yet the great Taskmaster does not despise the pavers. He did not give you the spirit and understanding for

paving, eh, is that it? How do you know He gave this Margaret Howth the spirit and understanding of a reformer? There may be higher work for her to do."

"Higher!" The old man stood aghast. "I know your creed, then,—that the true work for a man or a woman is that which develops their highest nature?"

Vandyke laughed.

"You have a creed-mania, Knowles. You have a confession of faith ready-made for everybody, but yourself. I only meant for you to take care what you do. That woman looks as the Prodigal Son might have done when he began to be in want, and would fain have fed himself with the husks that the swine did eat."

Knowles got up moodily.

"Whose work is it, then?" he muttered, following the men down the street; for they walked on. "The world has waited six thousand years for help. It comes slowly,—slowly, Vandyke; even through your religion."

The young man did not answer: looked up, with quiet, rapt eyes, through the silent city, and the clear gray beyond. They passed a little church lighted up for evening service: as if to give a meaning to the old man's words, they were chanting the one anthem of the world, the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Hearing the deep organ-roll, the men stopped outside to listen: it heaved and sobbed through the night, as if bearing up to God the pain and wrong of countless aching hearts, then was silent, and a single voice swept over the moors in a long, lamentable cry:—"Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!"

The men stood silent, until the hush was broken by a low murmur:—"For Thou only art holy." Holmes had taken off his hat, unconscious that he did it; he put it on slowly, and walked on. What was it that Knowles had said to him once about mean and selfish taints on his divine soul? "For Thou only art holy": if there were truth in that!

"How quiet it is!" he said, as they stopped to leave him. It was,—a breathless quiet; the great streets of the town behind them were shrouded in snow; the hills, the moors, the prairie swept off into the skyless dark, a gray and motionless sea lit by a low watery moon. "The very earth listens," he said.

"Listens for what?" said the literal old Doctor.

"I think it listens always," said Vandyke, his eye on fire. "For its King—that shall be. Not as He came before. It has not long to wait now: the New Year is not far off."

"I've no faith in folding your hands, waiting for it; nor have you either, Charley," growled Knowles. "There's an infernal lot of work to be done before it comes, I fancy. Here, let me light my cigar."

Holmes bade them good-night, laughing, and struck into the by-road through the hills. He shook hands with Vandyke before he went,—a thing he scarce ever did with anybody. Knowles noticed it, and, after he was out of hearing, mumbled out some sarcasm at "a minister of the gospel consorting with a cold, silent scoundrel like that!" Vandyke listened to his scolding in his usual lazy way, and they went back into town.

The road Holmes took was rutted deep with wagon-wheels, not easily travelled; he walked slowly therefore, being weak, stopping now and then to gather strength. He had not counted the hours until this day, to be balked now by a little loss of blood. The moon was nearly down before he reached the Cloughton hills: he turned there into a narrow path which he remembered well. Now and then he saw the mark of a little shoe in the snow,—looking down at it with a hot panting in his veins and a strange flash in his eye, as he walked on steadily.

There was a turn in the path at the top of the hill, a sunken wall, with a broad stone from which the wind had blown the snow. This was the place. He sat down on the stone, resting. Just there she had stood, clutching her little fingers behind her, when he came up and threw back her hood to look in her face: how pale and worn it was, even then! He had not looked at her to-night: he would not, if he had been dying, with those men standing there. He stood alone in the world with this little Margaret. How

those men had carped, and criticized her, chattered of the duties of her soul! Why, it was his, it was his own, softer and fresher. There was not a glance with which they followed the weak little body in its poor dress that he had not seen, and savagely resented. They measured her strength? counted how long the bones and blood would last in their House of Refuge? There was not a morsel of her flesh that was not pure and holy in his eyes. His Margaret? He chafed with an intolerable fever to make her his, but for one instant, as she had been once. Now, when it was too late. For he went back over every word he had spoken that night, forcing himself to go through with it,—every cold, poisoned word. It was a fitting penance. "There is no such thing as love in real life": he had told her that! How he had stood, with all the power of his "divine soul" in his will, and told her,—he,—a man,—that he put away her love from him then, forever! He spared himself nothing,—slurred over nothing; spurned himself, as it were, for the meanness, the niggardly selfishness in which he had wallowed that night. How firm he had been! how kind! how masterful!—pluming himself on his man's strength, while he held her in his power as one might hold an insect, played with her shrinking woman's nature, and trampled it under his feet, coldly and quietly! She was in his way, and he had put her aside. How the fine subtile spirit had risen up out of its agony of shame, and scorned him! How it had flashed from the puny frame standing there in the muddy road despised and jeered at, and calmly judged him! He might go from her as he would, toss her off like a worn-out plaything, but he could not blind her: let him put on what face he would to the world, whether they called him a master among men, or a miser, or, as Knowles did to-night after he turned away, a scoundrel, this girl laid her little hand on his soul with an utter recognition: she alone. "She knew him for a better man than he knew himself that night": he remembered the words.

The night was growing murky and bitingly cold: there was no prospect on the snow-covered hills, or the rough road at his feet with its pools of ice-water, to bring content into his face, or the dewy light into his eyes; but they came there, slowly, while he sat thinking. Some old thought was stealing into his brain, perhaps, fresh and warm, like a soft spring air,—some hope of the future, in which this child-woman came close to him and near. It was an idle dream, only would taunt him when it was over, but he opened his arms to it: it was an old friend; it had made him once a purer and better man than he could ever be again. A warm, happy dream, whatever it may have been: the rugged, sinister face grew calm and sad, as the faces of the dead change when loving tears fall on them.

He sighed wearily: the homely little hope was fanning into life stagnant depths of desire and purpose, stirring his resolute ambition. Too late? Was it too late? Living or dead she was his, though he should never see her face, by some subtile power that had made them one, he knew not when nor how. He did not reason now,—abandoned himself, as morbid men only do, to this delirious hope, simple and bonny, of a home, and cheerful warmth, and this woman's love fresh and eternal: a pleasant dream at first, to be put away at pleasure. But it grew bolder, touched under-deeps in his nature of longing and intense passion; all that he knew or felt of power or will, of craving effort, of success in the world, drifted into this dream and became one with it. He stood up, his vigorous frame starting into a nobler manhood, with the consciousness of right,—with a willed assurance, that, the first victory gained, the others should follow.

It was late; he must go on; he had not meant to sit idling by the road-side. He went through the fields, his heavy step crushing the snow, a dry heat in his blood, his eye intent, still, until he came within sight of the farm-house; then he went on, cool and grave, in his ordinary port.

The house was quite dark; only a light in one of the lower windows,—the library, he thought. The broad field he was crossing sloped down to the house, so that, as he came nearer, he saw the little room quite plainly in the red glow of the fire within, the curtains being undrawn. He had a keen eye; did not fail to see the marks of poverty about the place, the gateless fences, even the bare room with its worn and patched carpet: noted it all with a triumphant gleam of satisfaction. There was a black shadow passing and repassing the windows: he waited a moment looking at it, then came more slowly towards them, intenser heats smouldering in his face. He would not surprise her; she should

be as ready as he was for the meeting. If she ever put her pure hand in his again, it should be freely done, and of her own good-will.

She saw him as he came up on the porch, and stopped, looking out, as if bewildered,—then resumed her walk, mechanically. What it cost her to see him again he could not tell: her face did not alter. It was lifeless and schooled, the eyes looking straight forward always, indifferently. Was this his work? If he had killed her outright, it would have been better than this.

The windows were low: it had been his old habit to go in through them, and he now went up to one unconsciously. As he opened it, he saw her turn away for an instant; then she waited for him, entirely tranquil, the clear fire shedding a still glow over the room, no cry or shiver of pain to show how his coming broke open the old wound. She smiled even, when he leaned against the window looking, with a careless welcome.

Holmes stopped, confounded. It did not suit him,—this. If you know a man's nature, you comprehend why. The bitterest reproach or a proud contempt would have been less galling than this gentle indifference. His hold had slipped from off the woman, he believed. A moment before he had remembered how he had held her in his arms, touched her cold lips, and then flung her off,—he had remembered it, his every nerve shrinking with remorse and unutterable tenderness: now—! The utter quiet of her face told more than words could do. She did not love him; he was nothing to her. Then love was a lie. A moment before he could have humbled himself in her eyes as low as he lay in his own, and accepted her pardon as a necessity of her enduring, faithful nature: now the whole strength of the man sprang into rage and mad desire of conquest.

He came gravely across the room, holding out his hand with his old quiet control. She might be cold and grave as he, but underneath he knew there was a thwarted hungry spirit,—a strong fine spirit as dainty Ariel. He would sting it to life, and tame it: it was his.

"I thought you would come, Stephen," she said, simply, motioning him to a chair.

Could this automaton be Margaret? He leaned on the mantel-shelf, looking down with a cynical sneer.

"Is that the welcome? Why, there are a thousand greetings for this time of love and good words you might have chosen. Besides, I have come back ill and poor,—a beggar perhaps. How do women receive such,—generous women? Is there no formula? no hand-shaking? nothing more? remembering that I was once—not indifferent to you."

He laughed. She stood still and grave as before.

"Why, Margaret, I have been down near death since that night."

He thought her lips grew gray, but she looked up clear and steady.

"I am glad you did not die. Yes, I can say that. As for hand-shaking, my ideas may be peculiar as your own."

"She measures her words," he said, as to himself; "her very eye-light is ruled by decorum; she is a machine, for work. She has swept her child's heart clean of anger and revenge, even scorn for the wretch that sold himself for money. There was nothing else to sweep out, was there?"—bitterly, —"no friendships, such as weak women nurse and coddle into being,—or love, that they live in, and die for sometimes, in a silly way?"

"Unmanly!"

"No, not unmanly. Margaret, let us be serious and calm. It is no time to trifle or wear masks. That has passed between us which leaves no room for sham courtesies."

"There needs none,"—meeting his eye unflinchingly. "I am ready to meet you and hear your farewell. Dr. Knowles told me your marriage was near at hand. I knew you would come, Stephen. You did before."

He winced,—the more that her voice was so clear of pain.

"Why should I come? To show you what sort of a heart I have sold for money? Why, you know, little Margaret. You can reckon up its deformity, its worthlessness, on your cool fingers. You could

tell the serene and gracious lady who is chaffering for it what a bargain she has made,—that there is not in it one spark of manly honor or true love. Don't venture too near it in your coldness and prudence. It has tiger passions I will not answer for. Give me your hand, and feel how it pants like a hungry fiend. It will have food, Margaret."

She drew away the hand he grasped, and stood back in the shadow.

"What is it to me?"—in the same measured voice.

Holmes wiped the cold drops from his forehead, a sort of shudder in his powerful frame. He stood a moment looking into the fire, his head dropped on his arm.

"Let it be so," he said at last, quietly. "The worn old heart can gnaw on itself a little longer. I have no mind to whimper over pain."

Something that she saw on the dark sardonic face, as the red gleams lighted it, made her start convulsively, as if she would go to him; then controlling herself, she stood silent. He had not seen the movement,—or, if he saw, did not heed it. He did not care to tame her now. The firelight flashed and darkened, the crackling wood breaking the dead silence of the room.

"It does not matter," he said, raising his head, laying his arm over his strong chest unconsciously, as if to shut in all complaint. "I had an idle fancy that it would be good on this Christmas night to bare the secrets of crime and selfishness hidden in here to you,—to suffer your pure eyes to probe the sorest depths: I thought perhaps they would have a blessing power. It was an idle fancy. What is my want or crime to you?"

The answer came slowly, but it did come.

"Nothing to me."

She tried to meet the gaunt face looking down on her with a proud sadness,—did meet it at last with her meek eyes.

"No, nothing to you. There is no need that I should stay longer, is there? You made ready to meet me, and have gone through your part well."

"It is no part. I speak God's truth to you as I can."

"I know. There is nothing more for us to say to each other In this world, then, except good-night. Words—polite words—are bitterer than death, sometimes. If ever we happen to meet, that courteous smile on your face will be enough to speak—God's truth for you. Shall we say good-night now?"

"If you will."

She drew farther into the shadow, leaning on a chair.

He stopped, some sudden thought striking him.

"I have a whim," he said, dreamily, "that I would like to satisfy. It would be a trifle to you: will you grant it?—for the sake of some old happy day, long ago?"

She put her hand up to her throat; then it fell again.

"Anything you wish, Stephen," she said, gravely.

"Yes. Come nearer, then, and let me see what I have lost. A heart so cold and strong as yours need not fear inspection. I have a fancy to look into it, for the last time."

She stood motionless and silent.

"Come,"—softly,—"there is no hurt in your heart that fears detection?"

She came out into the full light, and stood before him, pushing back the hair from her forehead, that he might see every wrinkle, and the faded, lifeless eyes. It was a true woman's motion, remembering even then to scorn deception. The light glowed brightly in her face, as the slow minutes ebbed without a sound: she only saw his face in shadow, with the fitful gleam of intolerable meaning in his eyes. Her own quailed and fell.

"Does it hurt you that I should even look at you?" he said, drawing back. "Why, even the sainted dead suffer us to come near them after they have died to us,—to touch their hands, to kiss their lips, to find what look they left in their faces for us. Be patient, for the sake of the old time. My whim is not satisfied yet."

"I am patient."

"Tell me something of yourself, to take with me when I go, for the last time. Shall I think of you as happy in these days?"

"I am contented,"—the words oozing from her white lips in the bitterness of truth. "I asked God, that night, to show me my work; and I think He has shown it to me. I do not complain. It is a great work."

"Is that all?" he demanded, fiercely.

"No, not all. It pleases me to feel I have a warm home, and to help keep it cheerful. When my father kisses me at night, or my mother says, 'God bless you, child,' I know that is enough, that I ought to be happy."

The old clock in the corner hummed and ticked through the deep silence like the humble voice of the home she toiled to keep warm, thanking her, comforting her.

"Once more," as the light grew stronger on her face,—"will you look down into your heart that you have given to this great work, and tell me what you see there? Dare you do it, Margaret?"

"I dare do it,"—but her whisper was husky.

"Go on."

He watched her more as a judge would a criminal, as she sat before him: she struggled weakly under the power of his eye, not meeting it. He waited relentless, seeing her face slowly whiten, her limbs shiver, her bosom heave.

"Let me speak for you," he said at last. "I know who once filled your heart to the exclusion of all others: it is no time for mock shame. I know it was my hand that held the very secret of your being. Whatever I may have been, you loved me, Margaret. Will you say that now?"

"I loved you,—once."

Whether it were truth that nerved her, or self-delusion, she was strong now to utter it all.

"You love me no longer, then?"

"I love you no longer."

She did not look at him; she was conscious only of the hot fire wearing her eyes, and the vexing click of the clock. After a while he bent over her silently,—a manly, tender presence.

"When love goes once," he said, "it never returns. Did you say it was gone, Margaret?"

One effort more, and Duty would be satisfied.

"It is gone."

In the slow darkness that came to her she covered her face, knowing and hearing nothing. When she looked up, Holmes was standing by the window, with his face toward the gray fields. It was a long time before he turned and came to her.

"You have spoken honestly: it is an old fashion of yours. You believed what you said. Let me also tell you what you call God's truth, for a moment, Margaret. It will not do you harm."—He spoke gravely, solemnly.—"When you loved me long ago, selfish, erring as I was, you fulfilled the law of your nature; when you put that love out of your heart, you make your duty a tawdry sham, and your life a lie. Listen to me. I am calm."

Was he calm? It was calmness that made her tremble as she had not done before.

"You have deceived yourself: when you try to fill your heart with this work, you serve neither your God nor your fellow-man. You tell me," stooping close to her, "that I am nothing to you: you believe it, poor child! There is not a line on your face that does not prove it false. I have keen eyes, Margaret !"—He laughed,—a savage, despairing laugh.—"You have wrung this love out of your heart? If it was easy to do, did it need to wring with it every sparkle of pleasure and grace out of your life? Your very hair is gathered out of your sight: you feared to remember how my hand had touched it? Your dress is stingy and hard; your step, your eyes, your mouth under rule. So hard it was to force yourself into an old worn-out woman! Oh, Margaret! Margaret!"

She moaned under her breath.

"I notice trifles, child! Yonder, in that corner, used to stand the desk where I helped you with your Latin. How you hated it! Do you remember?"

"I remember."

"It always stood there: it is gone now. Outside of the gate there was that elm I planted, and you promised to water while I was gone. It is cut down now by the roots."

"I had it done, Stephen."

"I know. Do you know why? Because you love me: because you do not dare to think of me, you dare not trust yourself to look at the tree that I had planted."

She started up with a cry, and stood there in the old way, her fingers catching at each other.

"It is cruel,—let me go!"

"It is not cruel."—He came up closer to her.—"You think you do not love me, and see what I have made you! Look at the torpor of this face,—the dead, frozen eyes! It is a 'nightmare, death in life,' Good God, to think that I have done this! To think of the countless days of agony, the nights, the years of solitude that have brought her to this,—little Margaret!"

He paced the floor, slowly. She sat down on a low stool, leaning her head on her hands. The little figure, the bent head, the quivering chin brought up her childhood to him. She used to sit so when he had tormented her, waiting to be coaxed back to love and smiles again. The hard man's eyes filled with tears, as he thought of it. He watched the deep, tearless sobs that shook her breast: he had wounded her to death,—his bonny Margaret! She was like a dead thing now: what need to torture her longer? Let him be manly and go out to his solitary life, taking the remembrance of what he had done with him for company. He rose uncertainly,—then came to her: was that the way to leave her?

"I am going, Margaret," he whispered, "but let me tell you a story before I go,—a Christmas story, say. It will not touch you,—it is too late to hope for that,—but it is right that you should hear it."

She looked up wearily.

"As you will, Stephen."

Whatever impulse drove the man to speak words that he knew were useless made him stand back from her, as though she were something he was unfit to touch: the words dragged from him slowly.

"I had a curious dream to-night, Margaret,—a waking dream: only a clear vision of what had been once. Do you remember—the old time?"

What disconnected rambling was this? Yet the girl understood it, looked into the low fire with sad, listening eyes.

"Long ago. That was a free, strong life that opened before us then, little one,—before you and me? Do you remember the Christmas before I went away? I had a strong arm and a hungry brain to go out into the world with, then. Something better, too, I had. A purer self than was born with me came late in life, and nestled in my heart. Margaret, there was no fresh loving thought in my brain for God or man that did not grow from my love of you; there was nothing noble or kindly in my nature that did not flow into that love and deepen there. I was your master, too. I held my own soul by no diviner right than I held your love and owed you mine. I understand it, now, when it is too late."—He wiped the cold drops from his face.—"Now do you know whether it is remorse I feel, when I think how I put this purer self away,—how I went out triumphant in my inhuman, greedy soul,—how I resolved to know, to be, to trample under foot all weak love or homely pleasures? I have been punished. Let those years go. I think, sometimes, I came near to the nature of the damned who dare not love: I would not. It was then I hurt you, Margaret,—to the death: your true life lay in me, as mine in you."

He had gone on drearily, as though holding colloquy with himself, as though great years of meaning surged up and filled the broken words. It may have been thus with the girl, for her face deepened as she listened. For the first time for many long days tears welled up into her eyes, and rolled between her fingers unheeded.

"I came through the streets to-night baffled in life,—a mean man that might have been noble,—all the years wasted that had gone before,—disappointed,—with nothing to hope for but time to work humbly and atone for the wrongs I had done. When I lay yonder, my soul on the coast of eternity, I resolved to atone for every selfish deed. I had no thought of happiness; God knows I had no hope of it. I had wronged you most: I could not die with that wrong unforgiven."

"Unforgiven, Stephen?" she sobbed; "I forgave it long ago."

He looked at her a moment, then by some master effort choked down the word he would have spoken, and went on with his bitter confession.

"I came through the crowded town, a homeless, solitary man, on the Christmas eve when love comes to every man. If ever I had grown sick for a word or touch from the one soul to whom alone mine was open, I thirsted for it then. The better part of my nature was crushed out, and flung away with you, Margaret. I cried for it,—I wanted help to be a better, purer man. I need it now. And so," he said, with a smile that hurt her more than tears, "I came to my good angel, to tell her I had sinned and repented, that I had made humble plans for the future, and ask her—God knows what I would have asked her then! She had forgotten me,—she had another work to do!"

She wrung her hands with a helpless cry. Holmes went to the window: the dull waste of snow looked to him as hopeless and vague as his own life.

"I have deserved it," he muttered to himself. "It is too late to amend."

Some light touch thrilled his arm.

"Is it too late, Stephen?" whispered a childish voice.

The strong man trembled, looking at the little dark figure standing near him.

"We were both wrong; let us be friends again."

She went back unconsciously to the old words of their quarrels long ago. He drew back.

"Do not mock me," he gasped. "I suffer, Margaret. Do not mock me with more courtesy."

"I do not; let us be friends again."

She was crying like a penitent child; her face was turned away; love, pure and deep, was in her eyes.

The red fire-light grew stronger; the clock hushed its noisy ticking to hear the story. Holmes's pale lip worked: what was this coming to him? He dared not hope, yet his breast heaved, a dry heat panted in his veins, his deep eyes flashed fire.

"If my little friend comes to me," he said, in a smothered voice, "there is but one place for her,—her soul with my soul, her heart on my heart."—He opened his arms.—"She must rest her head here. My little friend must be—my wife."

She looked into the strong, haggard face,—a smile crept out on her own, arch and debonair like that of old time.

"I am tired, Stephen," she whispered, and softly laid her head down on his breast.

The red fire-light flashed into a glory of crimson through the room, about the two figures standing motionless there,—shimmered down into awe-struck shadow: who heeded it? The old clock ticked away furiously, as if rejoicing that weary days were over for the pet and darling of the house: nothing else broke the silence. Without, the deep night paused, gray, impenetrable. Did it hope that far angel-voices would break its breathless hush, as once on the fields of Judea, to usher in Christmas morn? A hush, in air, and earth, and sky, of waiting hope, of a promised joy. Down there in the farm-window two human hearts had given the joy a name; the hope throbbed into being; the hearts touching each other beat in a slow, full chord of love as pure in God's eyes as the song the angels sang, and as sure a promise of the Christ that is to come. Forever and ever,—not even death would part them; he knew that, holding her closer, looking down into her face.

What a pale little face it was! Through the intensest heat of his passion the sting touched him: it was but one mark of his murderous selfishness. Some instinct made her glance up at him, as he thought this, with a keen insight, and she lifted her head from his breast, and when he stooped to touch

her lips, shook herself free, laughing carelessly. Their whole life was before them to taste happiness, and she had a mind they should taste it drop by drop. Alas, Stephen Holmes! you will have little time for morbid questionings in those years to come: your very pauses of silent content and love will be rare and well-earned. No more tranced raptures for to-night,—let tomorrow bring what it would.

"You do not seem to find your purer self altogether perfect?" she demanded. "I think the pale skin hurts your artistic eye, or the frozen eyes,—which is it?"

"They have thawed into brilliant fire,—something looks at me half-yielding and half-defiant,—you know that, you vain child! But, Margaret, nothing can atone"—

He stopped.

"That is right, Stephen. Remorse grows maudlin when it goes into words," laughing again at his astounded look.

He took her hand,—a dewy, healthy hand,—the very touch of it meant action and life.

"What if I say, then," he said, earnestly, "that I do not find my angel perfect, be the fault mine or hers? The child Margaret, with her sudden tears and laughter and angry heats, is gone,—I killed her, I think,—gone long ago. I will not take in place of her this worn, pale ghost, who wears clothes as chilly as if she came from the dead, and stands alone, as ghosts do."

She stood a little way off, her great brown eyes flashing with tears. It was so strange a joy to find herself cared for, when she had believed she was old and hard: the very idle jesting made her youth and happiness real to her. Holmes saw that with his quick tact. He flung playfully a crimson shawl that lay there about her white neck.

"My wife must suffer her life to flush out in gleams of color and light: her cheeks must hint at a glow within, as yours do now. I will have no hard angles, no pallor, no uncertain memory of pain in her life: it shall be perpetual summer."

He loosened her hair, and it rolled down about the bright, tearful face, shining in the red fire-light like a mist of tawny gold.

"I need warmth and freshness and light: my wife shall bring them to me. She shall be no strong-willed reformer, standing alone: a sovereign lady with kind words for the world, who gives her hand only to that man whom she trusts, and keeps her heart and its secrets for me alone."

She paid no heed to him other than by a deepening color; the clock, however, grew tired of the long soliloquy, and broke in with an asthmatic warning as to the time of night.

"There is midnight," she said. "You shall go, now, Stephen Holmes,—quick! before your sovereign lady fades, like Cinderella, into grayness and frozen eyes!"

When he was gone, she knelt down by her window, remembering that night long ago,—free to sob and weep out her joy,—very sure that her Master had not forgotten to hear even a woman's prayer, and to give her her true work,—very sure,—never to doubt again. There was a dark, sturdy figure pacing up and down the road, that she did not see. It was there when the night was over and morning began to dawn. Christmas morning! he remembered,—it was something to him now! Never again a homeless, solitary man! You would think the man weak, if I were to tell you how this word "home" had taken possession of him,—how he had planned out work through the long night: success to come, but with his wife nearest his heart, and the homely farm-house and the old schoolmaster in the centre of the picture. Such an humble castle in the air! Christmas morning was surely something to him. Yet, as the night passed, he went back to the years that had been wasted, with an unavailing bitterness. He would not turn from the truth, that, with his strength of body and brain to command happiness and growth, his life had been a failure. I think it was first on that night that the story of the despised Nazarene came to him with a new meaning,—One who came to gather up these broken fragments of lives and save them with His own. But vaguely, though: Christmas-day as yet was to him the day when love came into the world. He knew the meaning of that. So he watched with an eagerness new to him the day breaking. He could see Margaret's window, and a dim light in it: she would be awake, praying for him, no doubt. He pondered on that. Would you think Holmes weak,

if he forsook the faith of Fichte, sometime, led by a woman's hand? Think of the apostle of the positive philosophers, and say no more. He could see a flickering light at dawn crossing the hall: he remembered the old schoolmaster's habit well,—calling "Happy Christmas" at every door: he meant to go down there for breakfast, as he used to do, imagining how the old man would wring his hands, with a "Holla! you're welcome home, Stephen, boy!" and Mrs. Howth would bring out the jars of pine-apple preserve which her sister sent her every year from the West Indies. And then–Never mind what then. Stephen Holmes was very much in love, and this Christmas-day had much to bring him. Yet it was with a solemn shadow on his face that he watched the dawn, showing that he grasped the awful meaning of this day that "brought love into the world." Through the clear, frosty night he could hear a low chime of distant bells shiver the air, hurrying faint and far to tell the glad tidings. He fancied that the dawn flushed warm to hear the story,—that the very earth should rejoice in its frozen depths, if it were true. If it were true!—if this passion in his heart were but a part of an all-embracing power, in whose clear depths the world struggled vainly!—if it were true that this Christ did come to make that love clear to us! There would be some meaning then in the old schoolmaster's joy, in the bells wakening the city yonder, in even poor Lois's thorough content in this day,—for it would be, he knew, a thrice-happy day to her. A strange story that of the Child coming into the world,—simple! He thought of it, watching, through his cold, gray eyes, how all the fresh morning told it,—it was in the very air; thinking how its echo stole through the whole world,—how innumerable children's voices told it in eager laughter,—how even the lowest slave half-smiled, on waking, to think it was Christmas-day, the day that Christ was born. He could hear from the church on the hill that they were singing again the old song of the angels. Did this matter to him? Did he care, with the new throb in his heart, who was born this day? There is no smile on his face as he listens to the words, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men"; it bends lower,—lower only. But in the selfish eyes there are warm tears, and on his worn face a sad and solemn joy.

I am going to end my story now, There are phases more vivid in the commonplace lives of these men and women, I do not doubt: love as poignant as pain in its joy; crime, weak and foul and foolish, like all crime; silent self-sacrifices: but I leave them for you to paint; you will find colors enough in your own house and heart.

As for Christmas-day, neither you nor I need try to do justice to that theme: how the old schoolmaster went about, bustling, his thin face quite hot with enthusiasm, and muttering, "God bless my soul!"—hardly recovered from the sudden delight of finding his old pupil waiting for him when he went down in the morning; how he insisted on being led by him, and nobody else, all day, and before half an hour had confided, under solemn pledges of secrecy, the great project of the book about Bertrand de Born; how even easy Mrs. Howth found her hospitable Virginian blood in a glow at the unexpected breakfast-guest,—settling into more confident pleasure as dinner came on, for which success was surer; how cold it was, outside; how Joel piled on great fires, and went off on some mysterious errand, having "other chores to do than idling and duddering"; how the day rose into a climax of perfection at dinner-time, to Mrs. Howth's mind,—the turkey being done to a delicious brown, the plum-pudding quivering like luscious jelly (a Christian dinner to-day, if we starve the rest of the year!). Even Dr. Knowles, who brought a great bouquet out for the schoolmaster, was in an unwonted good-humor; and Mr. Holmes, of whom she stood a little in dread, enjoyed it all with such zest, and was so attentive to them all, but Margaret. They hardly spoke to each other all day; it quite fretted the old lady; indeed, she gave the girl a good scolding about it out in the pantry, until she was ready to cry. She had looked that way all day, however.

Knowles was hurt deep enough when he saw Holmes, and suspected the worst, under all his good-humor. It was a bitter disappointment to give up the girl; for, beside the great work, he loved her in an uncouth fashion, and hated Holmes. He met her alone in the morning; but when he saw how pale she grew, expecting his outbreak, and how she glanced timidly in at the room where Stephen

was, he relented. Something in the wet brown eye perhaps recalled a forgotten dream of his boyhood; for he sighed sharply, and did not swear as he meant to. All he said was, that "women will be women, and that she had a worse job on her hands than the House of Refuge,"—which she put down to the account of his ill-temper, and only laughed, and made him shake hands.

Lois and her father came out in the old cart in high state across the bleak, snowy hills, quite aglow with all they had seen at the farm-houses on the road. Margaret had arranged a settle for the sick girl by the kitchen-fire, but they all came out to speak to her.

As for the dinner, it was the essence of all Christmas dinners: Dickens himself, the priest of the genial day, would have been contented. The old schoolmaster and his wife had hearts big and warm enough to do the perpetual honors of a baronial castle; so you may know how the little room and the faces about the homely table glowed and brightened. Even Knowles began to think that Holmes might not be so bad, after all, recalling the chicken in the mill, and,—

"Well, it was better to think well of all men, poor devils!"

I am sorry to say there was a short thunder-storm in the very midst of the dinner. Knowles and Mr. Howth, in their anxiety to keep off from ancient subjects of dispute, came, for a wonder, on modern politics, and of course there was a terrible collision, which made Mrs. Howth quite breathless: it was over in a minute, however, and it was hard to tell which was the most repentant. Knowles, as you know, was a disciple of Garrison, and the old schoolmaster was (will the "Atlantic" bear it?) a States'-rights man, as you might expect from his antecedents,—suspected, indeed, of being a contributor to "De Bow's Review." I may as well come out with the whole truth, and acknowledge that at the present writing the old gentleman is the very hottest Secessionist I know. If it hurts the type, write it down a vice of blood, O printers of New England!—or else, like Uncle Toby's recording angel, drop a tear upon the word, and blot it out forever.

The dinner, perhaps, was fresher and heartier after that. Then Knowles went back to town; and in the middle of the afternoon, as it grew dusk, Lois started, knowing how many would come into her little shanty in the evening to wish her Happy Christmas, although it was over. They piled up comforts and blankets in the cart, and she lay on them quite snugly, her scarred child's-face looking out from a great woollen hood Mrs. Howth gave her. Old Yare held Barney, with his hat in his hand, looking as if he deserved hanging, but very proud of the kindness they all showed his girl. Holmes gave him some money for a Christmas gift, and he took it, eagerly enough. For some unexpressed reason, they stood a long time in the snow bidding Lois good-bye; and for the same reason, it may be, she was loath to go, looking at each one earnestly as she laughed and grew red and pale answering them, kissing Mrs. Howth's hand when she gave it to her. When the cart did drive away, she watched them standing there until she was out of sight, and waved her scrap of a handkerchief; and when the road turned down the hill, lay down and softly cried to herself.

Now that they were alone they gathered close about the fire, while the day without grew gray and colder,—Margaret in her old place by her father's knee. Some dim instinct had troubled the old man all day; it did now: whenever Margaret spoke, he listened eagerly, and forgot to answer sometimes, he was so lost in thought. At last he put his hand on her head, and whispered, "What ails my little girl?" And then his little girl sobbed and cried, as she had been ready to do all day, and kissed his trembling hand, and went and hid on her mother's neck, and left Stephen to say everything for her. And I think you and I had better come away. Are not these things written on the fairest page of Stephen Holmes's remembrance?

It was quite dark before they had done talking,—quite dark; the wood-fire had charred down into a great bed of crimson; the tea stood till it grew cold, and no one drank it. The old man got up at last, and Holmes led him to the library, where he smoked every evening. He held Maggie, as he called her, in his arms a long time, and wrung Holmes's hand. "God bless you, Stephen!" he said,—"this is a very happy Christmas-day to me." And yet, sitting alone, the tears ran over his wrinkled face as he smoked; and when his pipe went out, he did not know it, but sat motionless. Mrs. Howth, fairly

confounded by the shock, went upstairs, and stayed there a long time. When she came down, the old lady's blue eyes were tenderer, if that were possible, and her face very pale. She went into the library and asked her husband if she didn't prophesy this two years ago, and he said she did, and after a while asked her if she remembered the barbecue-night at Judge Clapp's thirty years ago. She blushed at that, and then went up and kissed him. She had heard Joel's horse clattering up to the kitchen-door, so concluded she would go out and scold him. Under the circumstances it would be a relief.

If Mrs. Howth's nerves had been weak, she might have supposed that free-born serving-man seized with sudden insanity, from the sight that met her, going into the kitchen. His dinner, set on the dresser, was flung contemptuously on the ashes; a horrible cloud of burning grease rushed from a dirty pint-pot on the table, and before this Joel was capering and snorting like some red-headed Hottentot before his fetich, occasionally sticking his fingers into the nauseous stuff, and snuffing it up as if it were roses. He was a church-member: he could *not* be drunk? At the sight of her, he tried to regain the austere dignity usual to him when women were concerned, but lapsed into an occasional giggle, which spoiled the effect.

"Where have you been," she inquired, severely, "scouring the country like a heathen on this blessed day? And what is that you have burning? You're disgracing the house, and strangers in it."

Joel's good-humor was proof against even this.

"I've scoured to some purpose, then. Dun't tell the mester: it'll muddle his brains t'-night. Wait till mornin'. Squire More'll be down hisself t' 'xplain."

He rubbed the greasy fingers into his hair, while Mrs. Howth's eyes were fixed in dumb perplexity.

"Ye see,"—slowly, determined to make it clear to her now and forever,—"it's water: no, t' a'n't water: it's troubled me an' Mester Howth some time in Poke Run, atop o"t. I hed my suspicions,—so'd he; lay low, though, frum all women-folks. So's I tuk a bottle down, unbeknown, to Squire More, an' it's oil!"—jumping like a wild Indian,—"thank the Lord fur His marcies, it's oil!"

"Well, Joel," she said, calmly, "very disagreeably smelling oil it is, I must say."

"Good save the woman!" he broke out, *sotto voce*, "she's a born natural! Did ye never hear of a shaft? or millions o' gallons a day? It's better nor a California ranch, I tell ye. Mebbe," charitably, "ye didn't know Poke Run's the mester's?"

"I certainly do. But I do not see what this green ditch-water is to me. And I think, Joel,"—

"It's more to ye nor all yer States'-rights as I'm sick o' hearin' of. It's carpets, an' bunnets, an' slithers of railroad-stock, an' some color on Margot's cheeks,—ye'd best think o' that! That's what it is to ye! I'm goin' to take stock myself. I'm glad that gell'll git rest frum her mills an' her Houses o' Deviltry,—she's got gumption fur a dozen women."

He went on muttering, as he gathered up his pint-pot and bottle,—

"I'm goin' to send my Tim to college soon's the thing's in runnin' order. Lord! what a lawyer that boy'll make!"

Mrs. Howth's brain was still muddled.

"You are better pleased than you were at the election," she observed, placidly.

"Politics be darned!" he broke out, forgetting the teachings of Mr. Clinche. "Now, Mem, dun't ye muddle the mester's brain t'-night wi' 't, I say. I'm goin' t' 'xperiment myself a bit."

Which he did, accordingly,—shutting himself up in the smoke-house, and burning the compound in divers sconces and Wide-Awake torches, giving up the entire night to his diabolical orgies.

Mrs. Howth did not tell the master, for one reason: it took a long time for so stupendous an idea to penetrate the good lady's brain; and for another: her motherly heart was touched by another story than this Aladdin's lamp of Joel's wherein burned petroleum. She watched from her window until she saw Holmes crossing the icy road: there was a little bitterness, I confess, in the thought that

he had taken her child from her; but the prayer that rose for them both took her whole woman's heart with it, and surely will be answered.

The road was rough over the hills; the wind that struck Holmes's face bitingly keen: perhaps the life coming for him would be as cold a struggle, having not only poverty to conquer, but himself. But he is a strong man,—no stronger puts his foot down with cool, resolute tread; and to-night there is a thrill on his lips that never rested there before,—a kiss, dewy and warm. Something, too, stirs in his heart, like a subtile atom of pure fire, that he hugs closely,—his for all time. No poverty or death shall ever drive it away. Perhaps he entertains an angel unaware.

After that night Lois never left her little shanty. The days that followed were like one long Christmas; for her poor neighbors, black and white, had some plot among themselves, and worked zealously to make them seem so to her. It was easy to make these last days happy for the simple little soul who had always gathered up every fragment of pleasure in her featureless life, and made much of it, and rejoiced over it. She grew bewildered, sometimes, lying on her wooden settle by the fire; people had always been friendly, taken care of her, but now they were eager in their kindness, as though the time were short. She did not understand the reason, at first; she did not want to die: yet if it hurt her, when it grew clear at last, no one knew it; it was not her way to speak of pain. Only, as she grew weaker, day by day, she began to set her house in order, as one might say, in a quaint, almost comical fashion, giving away everything she owned, down to her treasures of colored bottles and needlework's, mending her father's clothes, and laying them out in her drawers; lastly, she had Barney brought in from the country, and every day would creep to the window to see him fed and chirrup to him, whereat the poor old beast would look up with his dim eye, and try to neigh a feeble answer. Kitts used to come every day to see her, though he never said much when he was there: he lugged his great copy of the Venus del Pardo along with him one day, and left it, thinking she would like to look at it; Knowles called it trash, when he came. The Doctor came always in the morning; he told her he would read to her one day, and did it always afterwards, putting on his horn spectacles, and holding her old Bible close up to his rugged, anxious face. He used to read most from the Gospel of St. John. She liked better to hear him than any of the others, even than Margaret, whose voice was so low and tender: something in the man's half-savage nature was akin to the child's.

As the day drew near when she was to go, every pleasant trifle seemed to gather a deeper, solemn meaning. Jenny Balls came in one night, and old Mrs. Polston.

"We thought you'd like to see her weddin'-dress, Lois," said the old woman, taking off Jenny's cloak, "seein' as the weddin' was to hev been to-morrow, and was put off on 'count of you."

Lois did like to see it; sat up, her face quite flushed to see how nicely it fitted, and stroked back Jenny's soft hair under the veil. And Jenny, being a warm-hearted little thing, broke into a sobbing fit, saying that it spoiled it all to have Lois gone.

"Don't muss your veil, child," said Mrs. Polston.

But Jenny cried on, hiding her face in Lois's skinny hand, until Sam Polston came in, when she grew quiet and shy. The poor deformed girl lay watching them, as they talked. Very pretty Jenny looked, with her blue eyes and damp pink cheeks; and it was a manly, grave love in Sam's face, when it turned to her. A different love from any she had known: better, she thought. It could not be helped; but it was better.

After they were gone, she lay a long time quiet, with her hand over her eyes. Forgive her! she, too, was a woman. Ah, it may be there are more wrongs that shall be righted yonder in the To-Morrow than are set down in your theology!

And so it was, that, as she drew nearer to this To-Morrow, the brain of the girl grew clearer, —struggling, one would think, to shake off whatever weight had been put on it by blood or vice or poverty, and become itself again. Perhaps, even in her cheerful, patient life, there had been hours when she had known the wrongs that had been done her, known how cruelly the world had thwarted her; her very keen insight into whatever was beautiful or helpful may have made her see her own

mischance, the blank she had drawn in life, more bitterly. She did not see it bitterly now. Death is honest; all things grew clear to her, going down into the valley of the shadow; so, wakening to the consciousness of stifled powers and ungiven happiness, she saw that the fault was not hers, nor His who had appointed her lot; He had helped her to bear it,—bearing worse himself. She did not say once, "I might have been," but day by day, more surely, "I shall be." There was not a tear in the homely faces turning from her bed, not a tint of color in the flowers they brought her, not a shiver of light in the ashy sky, that did not make her more sure of that which was to come. More loving she grew, as she went away from them, the touch of her hand more pitiful, her voice more tender, if such a thing could be,—with a look in her eyes never seen there before. Old Yare pointed it out to Mrs. Polston one day.

"My girl's far off frum us," he said, sobbing in the kitchen,—"my girl's far off now."

It was the last night of the year that she died. She was so much better that they all were quite cheerful. Kitts went away as it grew dark, and she bade him wrap up his throat with such a motherly dogmatism that they all laughed at her; she, too, with the rest.

"I'll make you a New-Year's call," he said, going out; and she called out that she should be sure to expect him.

She seemed so strong that Holmes and Mrs. Polston and Margaret, who were there, were going home; besides, old Yare said, "I'd like to take care o' my girl alone to-night, ef yoh'd let me,"—for they had not trusted him before. But Lois asked them not to go until the Old Year was over; so they waited downstairs.

The old man fell asleep, and it was near midnight when he wakened with a cold touch on his hand.

"It's come, father!"

He started up with a cry, looking at the new smile in her eyes, grown strangely still.

"Call them all, quick, father!"

Whatever was the mystery of death that met her now, her heart clung to the old love that had been true to her so long.

He did not move.

"Let me hev yoh to myself, Lo, 't th' last; yoh're all I hev; let me hev yoh 't th' last."

It was a bitter disappointment, but she roused herself even then to smile, and tell him yes, cheerfully. You call it a trifle, nothing? It may be; yet I think the angels looking down had tears in their eyes, when they saw the last trial of the unselfish, solitary heart, and kept for her a different crown from his who conquers a city.

The fire-light grew warmer and redder; her eyes followed it, as if all that had been bright and kindly in her life were coming back in it. She put her hand on her father, trying vainly to smooth his gray hair. The old man's heart smote him for something, for his sobs grew louder, and he left her a moment; then she saw them all, faces very dear to her even then. She laughed and nodded to them all in the old childish way; then her lips moved. "It's come right!" she tried to say; but the weak voice would never speak again on earth.

"It's the turn o' the night," said Mrs. Polston, solemnly; "lift her head; the Old Year's goin' out."

Margaret lifted her head, and held it on her breast. She could hear cries and sobs; the faces, white now, and wet, pressed nearer, yet fading slowly: it was the Old Year going out, the worn-out year of her life. Holmes opened the window: the cold night-wind rushed in, bearing with it snatches of broken harmony: some idle musician down in the city, playing fragments of some old, sweet air, heavy with love and regret. It may have been chance: yet let us think it was not chance; let us believe that He who had made the world warm and happy for her chose that this best voice of all should bid her goodbye at the last.

So the Old Year went out. The dull eyes, loving to the end, wandered vaguely as the sounds died away, as if losing something,—losing all, suddenly. She sighed as the clock struck, and then a strange

calm, unknown before, stole over her face; her eyes flashed open with a living joy. Margaret stooped to close them, kissing the cold lids; and Tiger, who had climbed upon the bed, whined and crept down.

"It is the New Year," said Holmes, bending his head.

The cripple was dead; but *Lois*, free, loving, and beloved, trembled from her prison to her Master's side in the To-Morrow.

I can show you her grave out there in the hills,—a short, stunted grave, like a child's. No one goes there, although there are many firesides where they speak of "Lois" softly, as of something holy and dear: but they think of her always as gone home; even old Yare looks up, when he talks of "my girl." Yet, knowing that nothing in God's just universe is lost, or fails to meet the late fulfilment of its hope, I like to think of her poor body lying there: I like to believe that the great mother was glad to receive the form that want and crime of men had thwarted,—took her uncouth child home again, that had been so cruelly wronged,—folded it in her warm bosom with tender, palpitating love.

It pleased me in the winter months to think that the worn-out limbs, the old scarred face of Lois rested, slept: crumbled into fresh atoms, woke at last with a strange sentience, and, when God smiled permission through the summer sun, flashed forth in a wild ecstasy of the true beauty that she loved so well. In no questioning, sad pallor of sombre leaves or gray lichens: throbbed out rather in answering crimsons, in lilies, white, exultant in a chordant life!

Yet, more than this: I strive to grope, with dull, earthy sense, at her freed life in that earnest land where souls forget to hunger or to hope, and learn to be. And so thinking, the certainty of her aim and work and love yonder comes with a new, vital reality, beside which the story of the yet living men and women of whom I have told you grows vague and incomplete, like an unguessed riddle. I have no key to solve it with,—no right to solve it. Let me lay the pen abruptly down.

My story is coarse, unended, a mere groping hint? It has no conduit of God's justice running through it, awarding good and ill? It lacks determined concord, and a certain yea and nay? I know: it is a story of To-Day. The Old Year is on us yet. Poor faithful old Knowles will tell you that it is a dark day: that now, as eighteen hundred years ago, the Helper stands unwelcome in the world: that the air is filled with the cry of the slave, and of nations going down into darkness, their message untold, their work undone: that your own heart, as well as the great humanity, asks, even now, an unrendered justice. Does he utter all the problem of To-Day? I think, not all: yet let it be. Other hands are strong to show you how, in the very instant peril of this hour, is lifted clearer into view the eternal, hopeful prophecy; may tell you that the slumbering heaven and the unquiet earth are instinct with it; that the unanswered prayer of your own life should teach it to you; that in that Book wherein God has not scorned to write the history of America we find the quiet surety that the To-Morrow of the world is near at hand.

For me, I have no prophetic insight, as I said before: the homely things of every day wear their old faces. This moment, the evening air thrills with a purple of which no painter has caught the tint, no poet the meaning; not a face passes me in the street on which some human voice has not the charm to call out love or power: the Helper yet waits amongst us; surely, this Old Year you despise holds beauty, work, content yet unmastered. Child-souls, you tell me, like that of Lois, may find it enough to hold no past and no future, to accept the work of each moment, and think it no wrong to drink every drop of its beauty and joy: we who are wiser laugh at them. It may be: yet I say unto you, their angels only do always behold the face of my Father in the New Year.

MOUNTAIN PICTURES

I.
FRANCONIA FROM THE PEMIGEWASSET

Once more, O Mountains of the North, unveil
Your brows, and lay your cloudy mantles by!
And once more, ere the eyes that seek ye fail,
Uplift against the blue walls of the sky
Your mighty shapes, and let the sunshine weave
Its golden net-work in your belting woods,
Smile down in rainbows from your falling floods,
And on your kingly brows at morn and eve
Set crowns of fire! So shall my soul receive
Haply the secret of your calm and strength,
Your unforgotten beauty interfuse
My common life, your glorious shapes and hues
And sun-dropped splendors at my bidding come,
Loom vast through dreams, and stretch in billowy length
From the sea-level of my lowland home!

They rise before me! Last night's thunder-gust
Roared not in vain: for, where its lightnings thrust
Their tongues of fire, the great peaks seem so near,
Burned clean of mist, so starkly bold and clear,
I almost pause the wind in the pines to hear,
The loose rock's fall, the steps of browsing deer.
The clouds that shattered on yon slide-worn walls
And splintered on the rocks their spears of rain
Have set in play a thousand waterfalls,
Making the dusk and silence of the woods
Glad with the laughter of the chasing floods
And luminous with blown spray and silver gleams,
While, in the vales below, the dry-lipped streams
Sing to the freshened meadow-lands again.
So, let me hope, the battle-storm that beats
The land with hail and fire may pass away
With its spent thunders at the break of day,
Like last night's clouds, and leave, as it retreats,
A greener earth and fairer sky behind,
Blown crystal-clear by Freedom's Northern wind!

THE USE OF THE RIFLE

In no branch of manufacture has human ingenuity been taxed more vigorously, for the attainment of the highest possible point of perfection, than in that of rifled guns for the use of the troops, on whose capacity for the destruction of their opponents the throne of the tyrant or the liberty of the people may be dependent. Nations, companies, and individuals have expended years of time and millions of money in testing every conceivable contrivance which offered a hope of improvement in precision, force, facility of loading or firing, or any of the minute details which contribute to render the weapon more serviceable.

And yet, at this day, not only are the troops of different nations armed with rifles differing in size, weight, calibre, and degree of twist, requiring different instruction in their use, and shooting projectiles of widely different pattern, but scarcely any two gun-makers will be found to agree in all the details requisite to the construction of the most serviceable weapon. The reason for this diversity lies in the fact, that perfection in any one of its requirements can be attained only by the sacrifice of some portion at least of its other elements, and the point at which the balance should be fixed is a sliding scale covering as wide a range as that of the mental and physical differences of the men on whom the decision rests.

The objects to be attained are, precision and force at long ranges, facility of loading and firing, and such simplicity and strength in the general construction as to allow the least possible chance of derangement or mistake in the management, at the moment when such error might cost the owner his life. And in addition to these points it is required that the weight shall not exceed the amount which a man of the average strength needed for a soldier can manipulate and carry on the march without over-fatigue.

It will be seen that we have awarded the first place on the list of requisites to precision and force at long ranges; and we presume it is unnecessary to enter into any explanation of the obvious primary necessity for the attainment of those qualities. We find, however, that our progress towards perfection in this direction cannot proceed beyond a certain point, except at the cost of other qualities, which cannot be sacrificed with impunity.

Regarding it as a settled point that any recoil of the gun is just so much taken from the initial velocity of the ball, (and if any one doubts it, let him try the experiment of throwing a stone, and stepping backwards at the moment of propulsion,) it is obvious, that, for the attainment of the longest range, such a preponderance of weight in the gun over that of the projectile is necessary as to secure the least possible recoil, and this point seems to have been fixed by our best gun-makers at the ratio of five hundred to one, which would require a gun weighing nearly sixteen pounds to carry a half-ounce ball or shot. We use the word *ball* from habit, meaning, merely, the projectile, which will probably never again resume its spherical shape in actual service. We conceive the perfection of precision and range in rifle-practice to have been attained in the American target-ride, carrying a slug or cone of one ounce weight,—the gun itself weighing not less than thirty pounds,—and provided with a telescope-sight, and Clark's patent muzzle. At three-quarters of a mile this weapon may be said to be entirely trustworthy for an object of the size of a man, and to have force enough at that distance to disable three men. But it is obvious that such weight and such equipments as are required for it must render it utterly useless for ordinary field-service. It becomes, in fact, a species of light artillery, and as such we are firm in the conviction that it is destined to establish for itself a reputation which will render it henceforth a necessity in the composition of an army.

For troops of the line the weight of the gun should not exceed ten pounds. Now, if we reduce the rifle to that weight, and preserve the ratio of 1-500 as that of the ball, we reduce its range; for the momentum being, as every school-boy knows, in proportion to weight as well as velocity, a projectile which may be perfectly sure for two or three hundred yards flies wide of the mark at six hundred,

and can hardly be found at a thousand. Here begins the operation of the sliding scale, in the necessity of sacrificing some degree of precision, in order to procure a weapon fulfilling other indispensable requisites for the soldier's use. In the English and our own service, the Enfield and Springfield rifled muskets have been fixed upon as presenting the nearest attainable approach to perfection in all the desirable elements of a military rifle.

It is out of the question to look for any such nice work with these tools as our best amateur riflemen are constantly in the habit of performing with the heavy thick-barrelled American rifle. The short Enfield is found to shoot better than the long, owing to the increased "spring" of the long, thin barrel of the latter; and the English themselves are becoming aware that they have carried the point of reducing the weight too far, and their best gun-makers are now insisting upon the fact which General Jacobs told them years ago,—that a "heavy conical ball cannot be used effectively from a long, thin barrel like that of the Enfield rifle, which is liable to great vibration."

The Enfield rifle, however, is a long step in advance of the old smooth-bored musket, concerning which a veteran British officer has declared his opinion that "a man might sit at his ease in an armchair all day long while another at two hundred yards' distance was blazing away at him with a brown Bess, on the sole condition that he should, on his honor, aim exactly at him at every shot." *Per contra* to this, may be stated the fact, mentioned by Lord Raglan in his despatches, that at Balaklava a Russian battery of two guns was silenced by the skill in rifle-shooting of a single officer, (Lieutenant Godfrey,) who, approaching under cover of a ravine within six hundred yards, and having his men hand him their Enfield rifles in turn, actually picked off the artillerymen, one after another, till there were not enough left to serve the guns, and this in spite of the storm of shot and shell which they poured around him in reply, he being under no necessity of exposing a larger target than his head and shoulders for them to aim at.

A trustworthy breech-loading rifle has long been a *desideratum* with military men; but nothing has yet been produced which offers sufficient advantages, or seems sufficiently free from objections, to authorize its introduction as anything more than an experiment. In fact, the special object of a breech-loading gun—that of enabling its owner to deliver his fire with greater rapidity—is found in actual service to be an objection: the soldier being tempted, in the excitement of battle, to load and fire as rapidly as possible, and thus to waste the greater portion of his shots, whereas the primary object at such a time is to induce the deliberation which alone can insure efficiency. It must be obvious to any one who reflects upon the matter, that in reality the whole question of efficiency in battle must hinge upon the one point of precision of fire. It is well known that in actual service not more than one shot in six hundred takes effect, and, except for the moral effect of the roar of the musketry and the whistling of the balls, the remaining five hundred and ninety-nine might better have been kept in the cartridge-boxes. Upon raw troops, for the most part, this moral effect is sufficient to decide the question, with the addition of a comparatively small number of killed and wounded. But veteran troops are not disturbed by it. They know that a ball which misses by a quarter of an inch is as harmless as if it had never been shot, and they very soon learn to disregard the whistling. When they encounter such a fire, however, as the English met at Bunker's Hill and at New Orleans,—when the shots which miss are the exceptions, and those which hit, the rule, no amount of discipline or courage can avail. Disciplined soldiers are no more willing to be shot than raw levies; but having learned by experience that the danger in an ordinary action is very trifling in comparison with its appearance to the imagination of a recruit, they face it with a determination which to him is inconceivable. Make the apparent danger real, as in the cases we have cited, and veterans become as powerless as the merest tyros. With the stimulus of the present demand, it is probable that Yankee ingenuity will erelong produce some kind of rifle so far superior to anything yet known as to supersede all others; and indeed we have little doubt that such would already have been the case, but for the fact that comparatively few of our most ingenious mechanics are also expert riflemen, and none but a first-rate shot can thoroughly appreciate all the requirements of the weapon.

Since the Crimean War, the Governments of Europe seem to have become awakened to the fact, that, however important and desirable it may be to secure the best possible implements for the soldier's use, it is infinitely more so that he should know how to use them. In the hands of a marksman the rifle is an efficient weapon at half a mile's distance; but to expect on that account that it will do any more execution in the hands of one who is not familiar with it than a smooth-bored musket is as idle as it would be to hope that a person unacquainted with the violin could give us better music from a Cremona than he could from a corn-stalk fiddle.

For years past the European powers have been training men to the use of the rifle. Hundreds of thousands of Englishmen and Frenchmen are at this moment as familiar with the practical application of its powers as if their subsistence had been dependent upon its use. Government and people have perceived that the improvements in small-arms have wrought such a revolution in the art of war as to revive the necessity which existed in the days of archery, of making every man a marksman, and in England the old archery sports of prize-shooting and unremitting private practice have been renewed, with the substitution of the rifle for the bow; and besides the regular standing army, England is now guarded by two hundred thousand volunteers, every one of whom is a good rifleman, and who have all been subjected to such an amount of drilling as would enable them speedily to accomplish themselves in the art of united action. The inciting cause of this great national movement was the apprehension of a French invasion. Whether there was any ground for such apprehension, or whether the preparations which were made in consequence have served to avert the danger, are questions which are irrelevant to our present object, which lies nearer home.

It needs no argument at this moment to prove the possibility that we may become engaged in a foreign war, before we have done with the one we have on our hands at home; but without troubling ourselves with apprehensions of possible contingencies, have we not sufficient motive in the condition of affairs at home to render it an imperative duty to strengthen ourselves by every available means?

We have been so long unused to anything like warlike preparations that we find it difficult to arouse ourselves to a realization of the fact that every able-bodied man is liable to be called upon to render active service for his country; and when a war is raging within our borders, of whose termination the only thing that can be predicted with certainty is that it can be reached only through fearful suffering and destruction of life and property, is it not incumbent on every man to prepare himself by whatever means are within his reach to render his services efficient? That the affirmative would be the popular answer is sufficiently proved by a recurrence to the zeal with which we organized drill-clubs and practised military tactics in the early stages of the war. It was not long before the zeal died away. It soon proved a bore to people who could not help perceiving, that, however perfect they might become in the manual exercise, their efficiency as soldiers could hardly amount to much, when most of them had never fired a gun in their lives. And so the drill-room was quietly abandoned,—the conduct of the war was left to the Government and the army, while we looked on as mere spectators,—and the future was left to take care of itself.

We do not mourn greatly at the decay of the drill-clubs, which, in the form they assumed, were likely to be of little practical benefit; but we do most sincerely regret the decay of the spirit which led to their formation, for it was founded on the universal conviction of the fact, which exists at this moment in still stronger force, that every man ought to make himself ready for the possible contingency of his services being demanded in the field.

No man can foretell the chances and changes which are before us; but he must be ignorant indeed of human nature and human history, who does not perceive, that, even if our success in the present contest is all that we can hope, there are issues involved in the weighty questions which must ensue before the storm subsides, which may render the preservation of our liberties dependent upon our ability to resist the attempts of factions or of ambitious and unprincipled military leaders to overturn them. We have had evidence enough, since the struggle began, (if any one doubted it before,) that selfishness and ambition are not unrepresented among us; and if such spirits are abroad, they are

working for evil, and we are worse than foolish to trust to virtue and patriotism to encounter them unarmed. Do we not owe it to that fatal error, that we are in our present condition? Were not ambition and lust of power secretly strengthening their hands for years, in the hope to spring upon us unawares, and bind us fast before we could prepare for resistance?—and can we again suffer ourselves to be caught in the same trap?

The question implies its own answer, and the practical reply should be the immediate and universal instruction of the people in the use of arms; and to this end the readiest and most efficient means lie in the encouragement of rifle-practice, by the organization of rifle-clubs, the institution of shooting-matches for prizes, and the inculcation by all available methods of a taste for the acquirement of an art which constitutes the vital spirit of military efficiency. Wherever clubs can be formed, a course of drilling should be entered upon in connection with target-practice; but thousands of able-bodied men throughout the country may be unable to unite with clubs or attend the drills, who may yet perfect themselves in target-shooting, and the prizes at shooting-matches should be open to all competitors and all weapons.

The volume of instructions for the Hythe School, issued from the Horse-Guards, contains the following preliminary remarks:—"The rifle is placed in the soldier's hands for the destruction of his enemy; his own safety depends upon his efficient use of it: it cannot, therefore, be too strongly inculcated, that every man who has no defect in his eyes may be made a good shot, and that no degree of perfection he may have attained in the other parts of his drill can upon service remedy any want of proficiency in this; in fact, all his other instructions in marching and manoeuvring can do no more than place him in the best possible situation for using his weapon with effect."

To the assertion that "every man who has no defect in his eyes may be made a good shot," we beg leave to object, or at least to accept it with allowances. That every one may attain sufficient skill for ordinary military service, by which we mean according to modern requirements, we have no manner of doubt; but the experience of the great shooting-match at Wimbledon in July last proves conclusively the existence of very wide differences in the powers of men who had enjoyed equal opportunities of perfecting themselves; and we are confident that our best riflemen will sooner indorse the verdict of Frank Forester, who, after a fair statement of the obstacles to the attainment of perfection, concludes with the remark,—"It is impossible, therefore, for one-half at least, if not more, of mankind to become even fair rifle-shots, with any possible amount of practice; but to all men who have good eyes, iron nerves, sufficient physical strength, and phlegmatic tempers, it is a certainty beyond calculation that they can become first-rate rifle-shots with sufficient practice."[12]

We not only recognize this difference in the powers of different individuals, but we insist upon the importance of observing it in the military organization of the rifle corps. The men who prove by their work that they possess the skill which is the result of such a combination of moral and physical characteristics as are here enumerated should be selected for special duty, and armed with the most efficient weapons that can be procured, which, even at four times the cost of ordinary infantry muskets, would prove in the end the better economy, by rendering needless the enormous waste of ammunition which seems inseparable from the use of ordinary arms. The sharp-shooters thus selected should be armed in part with the best rifles of ordinary construction and weight, (and we are strongly inclined to believe, if allowed their own choice, they would select the common American hunting-rifle,) and a portion with the best telescope-rifles of the kind we have heretofore described. We are well aware, that, till recently, the introduction of these guns into the service has been scouted at by military men, and the experiment of sending a company of men provided with them and familiar with their use from this State was met with ridicule, which, however, has been changed to admiration by the triumphant manner in which they have vindicated the most sanguine hopes of those who were instrumental in procuring their introduction.

[12] *Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen*.

A letter from a member of the company says of them,—"The telescope-rifles more than equalled our expectations. They do good service at a mile, and are certain death at half a mile." At Edwards's Ferry, on the 22d of October, seventy men of this company repelled a charge of fifteen hundred of the enemy and drove them from the field, with the loss of more than one hundred killed, while not one of their own men received a scratch. They lay upon the ground behind a fence, resting their guns upon the lower rail, and the enemy came in sight half a mile distant and started towards them at double-quick, loading and firing as they ran; but before they had traversed half the distance, they had learned that the whistle of every bullet was the death-knell of one, and in many instances of more than one of their number, and coming to a slight ravine, the temptation of its shelter from so fearful a storm proved irresistible, and, turning up course, they fled in dismay, leaving their dead upon the ground in windrows. Three standard-bearers in succession fell before the fatal aim of the same rifle, and no man dared repeat the suicidal act of again displaying that ensign. We have seen a letter from an officer high in command who witnessed that action, and, after describing it, he remarks,—"There is more chance of credit to your State in the new gun and men than in twenty drilled regiments."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.